

DRAFT – Subject to Board review and approval at the June 9, 2023, meeting date

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Full Commission Board Meeting
4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln NE**

March 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A. Welcome

Chairperson Robert Feit called the meeting to order for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board on March 10, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. at 4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln Nebraska.

B. Notice of Open Meeting

Chairperson Robert Feit announced that the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all Board Members received notice simultaneously by email. Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in the March 3, 2023, edition of the Omaha World Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act. The agenda was kept current in the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’s office and on the NCDHH website. The materials generally used by the Board for the meeting today are on a table in a public folder that is available to the general public for the purpose of this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act {Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available for the duration of the meeting.

C. Roll Call

For the record, Board Members Ms. Candice Arteaga, Ms. Frances Beurivage, Mr. Robert Feit, Ms. Valerie “Vali” Hitz, Ms. Diane Schutt and Ms. Peggy Williams were all present for roll call. Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick, Mr. Jonathan Scherling and Ms. Sandra Shaw was absent. NCDHH staff members present were Ms. Kelsey Cruz, Interim Executive Director & Public Information Officer; Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator. Sign Language Interpreters present were Ms. Amber Tucker and Mr. Ben Sparks. Ms. Margaret “Mydge” Heaney with Inclusive Communication Access Nebraska provided CART services.

D. Review of Agenda

Interim Director Cruz reviewed the agenda with the Board Members.

Chairperson Feit noted that in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, the agenda cannot be altered within 24 hours of the meeting except for emergency items.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Diane Schutt moved to accept the agenda as written and presented. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

Ms. Candice Arteaga moved to accept the December 9, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

G. Chairperson of the Board's Report

1. Public Comments

No public comments

2. Personnel Discussion (Closed Session)

Ms. Peggy Williams made the motion to go into closed session. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. Going into closed session at 8:42 a.m. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

Chairperson Feit requested that Interim Executive Director Cruz to be present during the closed session discussion.

Ms. Diane Schutt made the motion to go into open session at 9:45 a.m. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

Interpreter Review Board (IRB) Appointments

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion to accept Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson as a Deaf representative and Ms. Briana Stradinger as a local government representative for the Interpreter Review Board. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) Appointments

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion to accept Ms. Briana Stradinger as a human services representative and Mr. Cody McEvoy as a counselor for the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz seconded the

motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion to approve Mr. Erick Decker's previous appointment to the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

10-minute break taken at 9:55 a.m.

Chairperson Feit called the meeting back at 10:09 a.m.

Chairperson Feit welcomed Ms. Vicki Steinhauer-Campbell and Mr. Jonathan Arteaga, visitors present for the meeting.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Advisory Committee Appointments

Ms. Peggy Williams made the motion to re-appoint Mr. Norman Weverka and Mr. Robert Feit to the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Advisory Committee. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent. Mr. Feit abstained

3. Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Advisory Committee Recap

Chairperson Feit shared that he took to the TRS Advisory Committee the Omaha Association of the Deaf (OAD) recommendations that were presented at the December 9, 2022 board meeting regarding the guidelines for Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP). Chairperson Feit shared OAD's desire for two changes; 1) the number of phones from 1 per household to 2 per household; 2) giving the individuals the ability to apply once every three years instead of once every five years.

Chairperson Feit shared the dollars that is involved in funding the NSTEP with the board members. The TRS Advisory Committee approves going forward with two phones per family. Next, this change needs to be taken to a Senator to change the policy for NSTEP by submitting legislation.

Conversation on how NSTEP is funded.

Conversation on what the guidelines are for Iowa's program in how many phones they allow per family. Ms. Arteaga shared that Iowa's equipment program is income based. Chairperson Feit commented that the big problem is

the source of funding for NSTEP.

Conversation on Verizon being one of the vendors for NSTEP, and their reputation in submitting invoices to the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Chairperson Feit is suggesting that NCDHH needs to draft a bill for next year's legislature and hopefully get Senator Wishart to carry the bill changing from one phone per household to two phones.

Ms. Arteaga thanked Chairperson Feit for the work that he has put into collecting the information in sorting out how this funding works for NSTEP. Ms. Arteaga added that OAD will be meeting next month, they want an update as well. Chairperson Feit and Interim Director Cruz will get together next week to draft a letter to OAD to give them an update.

4. **2022 Annual Report**

Interim Director Cruz shared with the board members the 2022 Annual Report for them to review.

Discussion between the members on the funding for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, and what would need to be done if NCDHH wanted to secure permanent funding. Interim Director Cruz shared with the members that the promotion of ARPA has been a top priority of the advocacy specialists, continuing to promote the use of the funds. Using the funds would give us more leverage if NCDHH wanted to continue with this program after the two-year funding has expired.

Discussion regarding ARPA funding and not being able to reimburse for remote interpreter services provided, the program only reimburses for live interpreter expenses.

Ms. Arteaga asked what needs to be done to ask for an extension for being able to spend the funds, also if changes can be made to the guidelines of the rural funds portion. Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator confirmed that the funding for ARPA is federal funds.

Discussion between the members on how to go about making changes to the rural portion guidelines of ARPA.

Ms. Diane Schutt made the motion to approve the 2022 Annual Report as presented. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

H. Executive Director Report

1. Budget Report

Ms. Peggy Williams asked for clarification from Ms. Jackie Novak, Budget & Finance Manager on the employee moving expense if that was regarding Arlene. Ms. Novak shared that cost was regarding Ms. Sharon Price, Behavioral Health Coordinator's moving expenses.

2. Top 10 Report

Interim Director Cruz shared with the members that these are the reports from the team members outlining what they have been doing since the December meeting.

3. Marketing Report

Interim Director Cruz shared with the members a few of the top items that NCDHH had promotion wise, mentioning the Text to 911 Workshop that Ms. Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist organized. Also mentioning that Mr. Jeremy Daffern, Advocacy Specialist recently had a Safety Day in Omaha that was very successful and is organizing a Safety Day in Norfolk the end of March. Ms. Ashley Wulf, Advocacy Specialist is working with the Omaha Storm Chasers on having a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day. Interim Director Cruz mentioned that we will be having another Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Lincoln Children's Zoo. NCDHH has decided to not have a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Awareness Day at the Lincoln Salt Dogs this year.

Interim Director Cruz handed out a one-page document on NCDHH's stance on over-the-counter hearing aid purchases. Discussion between the members on over-the-counter hearing aid usage.

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion to accept the Executive Director's report as presented. Ms. Diane Schutt seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

Interim Director Cruz gave the members up update on the status of the board members that need to be reappointed and needing to find a replacement for Ms. Candice Arteaga's position on the board.

I. Committee Reports

Nothing to report.

J. Old Business

Interim Director Cruz reminded the members about Accountability and Disclosure forms to submit.

K. New Business

Ms. Peggy Williams thanked Ms. Kelsey Cruz on the fantastic job that she has been doing with serving as the Interim Director. In addition, thanking Ms. Candice Arteaga for the assistance that she has given the agency during this interim basis. Applause by all. Interim Director Kelsey Cruz thanked the members for the opportunity.

L. Adjourn

Ms. Peggy Williams moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 a.m. Ms. Diane Schutt seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Mr. Feit, Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Schutt and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Scherling and Ms. Shaw was absent.

Next Meeting Date

- June 9, 2023 - _____ location needed